



Reading Toolkit: Grade 5 Objective 2.A.6.b

Student Handout: Reading: Grade 5 Objective 2.A.6.b

Standard 2.0 Comprehension of Informational Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Informational Text

Indicator 6. Read critically to evaluate informational text

Objective b. Identify and explain additions or changes to format or text features that would make the text easier to understand

Assessment Limits:

In the text or a portion of the text

Selected Response (SR) Item

Question

Read the article titled '[A Brick to Cuddle Up To](#)' and answer the following questions. Circle the letter of the correct answer.

Which of these text features would *most* help a reader better understand the information in this article?

- A. a map of a colonial town
- B. a drawing of a colonial fireplace
- C. a timeline of a typical colonist's day
- D. a set of instructions for using a foot stove

Correct Answer

B. a drawing of a colonial fireplace

Question

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Handouts

A Brick to Cuddle Up To

Imagine shivering on a cold winter's night. The tip of your nose tingles in the frosty air. Finally, you climb into bed and find the toasty treat you have been waiting for—your very own hot brick.

²If you had lived in colonial days, that would not sound as strange as it does today. Winters were hard in this New World, and the colonists had to think of clever ways to fight the cold. At bedtime, they heated soapstones, or bricks, in the fireplace. They wrapped the bricks in cloths and tucked them into their beds. The brick kept them warm at night, at least for as long as its heat lasted.

Before the colonists slipped into bed, they rubbed their icy sheets with a bed warmer. This was a metal pan with a long wooden handle. The pan held hot embers from the fireplace. It warmed the bedding so well that sleepy bodies had to wait until the sheets cooled before climbing in.

Staying warm wasn't just a bedtime problem. On winter rides, colonial travelers covered themselves with animal skins and warm blankets. Tucked under the blankets, near their feet, were small tin boxes called foot stoves.

A foot stove held burning coals. Hot smoke puffed from small holes in the stove's lid, soothing freezing feet and legs. When the colonists went to Sunday services, their foot stoves, furs and blankets went with them. The meeting houses had no heat of their own until the 1800s.

⁶At home, colonial families huddled close to the fireplace, or hearth. The fireplace was wide and high enough to hold a large fire, but its chimney was large, too. That caused a problem: Gusts of cold air blew into the house. The area near the fire was warm, but in the rest of the room it might still be cold enough to see your breath.

⁷Reading or needlework was done by candlelight, or by the light of the fire. During the winter, animal skins sealed the draft windows of some cabins and blocked out the daylight. The living area inside was gloomy, except in the circle of light at the hearth.

Early Americans did not bathe as often as we do. When they did, their "bathroom" was the kitchen, in that toasty space by the hearth. They partially filled a tub with cold water, then warmed it up with water heated in the fireplace. A blanket draped from chairs for privacy also let the fire's warmth surround the bather.

The household cooks spent hours at the hearth. They stirred the kettle of corn pudding or checked the baking bread while the rest of the family carried on their own fireside activities. So you can see why the fireplace was the center of a colonial home.

¹⁰The only time the fire was allowed to die down was at bedtime. Ashes would be piled over the fire, reducing it to embers that might glow until morning.

By sunrise, the hot brick had become a cold stone once more. An early riser might get dressed under the covers, then hurry to the hearth to warm up.

Maybe you'd enjoy hearing someone who kept warm in these ways tell you what it was like. You wouldn't need to look for someone who has been living for two hundred years. In many parts of the country the modern ways didn't take over from the old ones until recently. Your own grandparents or other older people might remember the warmth of a hearthside and the joy of having a brick to cuddle up to.